



To: House Education

From: Jay Nichols , Executive Director

Date: January 18, 2023

Subject: Worker Shortage PreK-12

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director the Vermont Principals' Association.

The person generally the most involved in the actual nuts & bolts of the hiring process for support staff and teachers within a given school is the principal. Typically this includes: setting up committees for interviews, checking references, conducting interviews, developing criteria for interview committees and making recommendations to the Superintendent as to the preferred candidate for a given position.

Principals report almost unanimously that hiring now is much more difficult than it was pre pandemic. A few key points:

- School Spring as of yesterday 1056 open jobs K-12 this includes all school employee jobs. This is a crazy number especially when we consider we are not in July or August!
- Paras being pulled away from their assignments to cover classrooms so school can be held when teachers are absent. Huge issues with students not being able to access IEP services in some cases because there is simply no personnel available
- Where once 100's of teacher applications for elementary teaching positions now dozens or less (higher paying districts). Poorer districts were once a dozen to two dozen applicants for these positions now single digits and sometimes no candidates at all
- Substitute teachers very hard to find - more money in retail than schools can afford to pay big issue

- 31% principal turnover rate this year; Highest ever in VT to my knowledge. Usually around 20% which is way too high
- The national beating up of public education and public educators across the country with the obsession to focus on test scores that usually measure superficial results and are not always aligned with the standards and outcomes we want for our students is driving people away from the profession. Additionally, the increased responsibility on school employees and public education to resolve or bandaid all of society's issues is exacerbating stress levels for school leaders and teachers.
  - Each institution in Vermont that has some historical context will tell you that the number of people looking at education as a profession has dropped dramatically in the last few decades with no positive end in sight

Potential School Workforce Solutions:

- Financial support/incentives for teachers who have a general license to pick up the special education endorsement. Encourage this - hardest position to find. Having classroom teachers with this endorsement and expertise will be more important in the post Act 175 world.
- Provide funding support to strengthen CTE Path to Education teaching
  - Especially incentivizes minority populations to become teachers
- Waive licensure expenses for people moving from other states
- Do an educator version of the Governor's \$10,000 remote worker concept - get educators to move here, stay a certain period of time in good standing and they collect the \$10,000
- 5 year retention bonus
  - Down payment toward a house
- Teacher funding support for home loans
  - Teachers often don't make enough money to get a house loan early in their careers. Owning a home makes it much more likely the educator will continue to live in VT
- Be a teacher in VT campaign AOE website and/or Dept. of Labor
  - Need to push this as a great place to teach
  - Real recruitment to bring teachers here
- Incentivize paraeducators to go into teaching, pay for course work
- Put money to mitigate Peer Review Cost for those who need it
- Need training and support and a pipeline for BI's
- Pension. Leave it alone. Already the weakest in the region and one of the weakest in the nation. This is a real deterrent.
- Higher pay across the state
- Flexible Schedules - would need to negotiated
- Celebrate teachers - right now education is considered the solution for everything that is wrong
- Child Care support needed for teachers and support staff. Support staff often have to pay more in child care than their wages - many of these positions are staffed by

individuals that are largely working simply for health insurance benefits for themselves and/or family

- State Loan Forgiveness from VT Institutions for people who pursue education and stay in VT for a given amount of time
- Providing mental health supports our educators' needs for our students. Teachers are not mental health counselors and that is much of their job day-to-day. Schools cannot fix all of society's ills. We have student behavior manifesting in many violent behaviors because basic mental health needs are not being met; kids are on waiting lists for months at a time before getting service. These children come to school every day and schools work to meet their needs - but educators do not have the training or resources to provide what many of these children need. We have many educators leaving the field because they feel overwhelmed and unable to teach students because of the myriad and complexity of the issues students face every day emerging in the classroom